From Cradle to Grave

A hilarious favorite was "grizzly bear." For this, a mound of sand, called the "sugar," was fashioned. Then one child was dragged around by his heels to smooth a circle around the "sugar." Outside the circle all the children formed a queue, holding to each others' waists and facing the mound. The leader was the "mother" protecting her young from the "grizzly," who was played by a child inside the circle. His part was to reach out of the circle and seize a child, but the mother protected the children by swinging the line back and forth. At last one child was caught and subjected to the penalty of being tickled ("eaten") by the bear in the circle. After that, players would break out of the line and try to dash in to steal some "sugar" from the grizzly's store and get out without his catching them. As each was caught, he was tickled, and the game went on until the "sugar" was all stolen or all the children were captured.

In another group game the children all sat in a row with their feet straight out in front of them. An old man had to join them in the fun. He would advance with closed eyes and feel up and down the row until he decided to choose one child. This one he picked up by the feet, head hanging down over his back, and carried him around in a circle back to the row. The other children asked the "It" many questions: "Do you have a horse, a saddle, a belt, etc?" The given answer was always "Yes." At last they rushed forward and took their playmate off the old man's back, crying that they were going to eat the old man. So they tickled the old fellow with joyous cries.

Other times they took pieces of old hide to the tops of hills. While some of the children rode on the hides, the others pulled them bouncing down with ropes. "Guess over the hill" (*nanip'ka*) was another favorite. Two older boys would organize the game. The boy who was "It" went over the hill; another stood guard at the top to make sure he did not spy while the other children hid under robes or blankets. When called by the guard, "It" came and tried to guess the names of the hiders.[6]

On rainy days all was still; the children lay quietly at home in their family tipis, for they were superstitiously afraid of thunder and lightning. Winter was the time for the telling of stories; not summer.

[6] Informant: Post Oak Jim.

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622 624 554 authority is measured by the amount of wealth he may possess and his reputation for courage and skill in war.

624 701 The authority of their war-chiefs often terminates at the conclusion of a single expedition, their official term expiring by limitation.

623 Once a year they have a general council, at which they settle disputes between rival warriors, make regulations and discuss matters pertaining to the welfare of the people. In this council all warriors are entitled to participate, which means, all the grown up men of the tribe. Occasionally [622] a warrior of great wealth, that is the owner of many ponies, and of great personal prowess, will exercise a sort of chieftaincy for many years together. But such instances are rare.

623 203 The council frame certain rules, sanctioned by custom, and not in travention to the will of the majority, and these are proclaimed by a chosen man, who rides among the lodges, pausing at convenient points to recite the law in the hearing of all the people.

673 685 684 Theft, adultery and murder are the cardinal crimes, and for the punishment of these offences, custom has established precedents which have all the authority of a written code. For the first, the offender may satisfy justice by restitution and additional gifts. The second is a crime which, according to Comanche law, men are incapable of committing. The woman guilty of this offense may be punished by castigation, mutilation, or the infliction of the death penalty, at the will of the husband. Her paramour, however, if disposed, can placate the husband by presents. For murder, 682 the penalty is death. The friends and relatives of the victim would disgrace themselves by compounding the felony. They are constituted the avengers, and invariably put to death the criminal, if they can find him. 673 These are about all the offenses cognizable by the Comanche code.

538 THE COMANCHES ARE GREAT STORY-TELLERS. In the mild autumn evenings they gather about the lodges in groups of five or six, and each one endeavors to surpass the others in marvelous stories, either of his own 538 adventures or those of some other person. They have a series of fables, 177 probably obtained from the Spanish Jesuit missionaries, who it is known visited them almost two centuries ago, which they term the "Talks of the [797] Liar." The Comanche name for liar is *esop*, which considering the striking [175] similarity between the "Talks of the *Esop*-Liar," and the fables of the Greek confirms me in the opinion that a majority of the lodge-fire stories of the Comanches are but modified versions of the fables familiar to every school-boy who is set to learn another language than his own. In these fables the fawn is substituted for the lamb, the bear for the lion, the coyote

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for the fox, the buffalo for the ox, the falcon for the kite, the quail for the dove, while the enemy of all, the banned wolf, plays the same part for the Comanche fabulist he has performed for all other fabulists. 538 177

The Comanches have, also, lodge-fire legends of their race, and of notable men, and incidents in their history which have been handed down through many generations. One or two of these may prove interesting. 538

"A long time ago there was a great drought. The streams dried up. The grass withered on the plains, then in the valleys. The heavens rained heat, and the dry grass took fire and burned over the whole earth. The animals all fled away, or died. There was nothing to eat. Qua-co-che-bitche was chief of a band. Among them there were many women and children. They lay upon the ground, and their hearts were weak. The sky was yellow with the heat, and all famished, for there was no shade and they had nothing to eat nor water to drink. Qua-co-che-bitche was a great hunter, and he prayed to the Great Spirit to send the buffalo back to the plains. Being strong, he took his bows and arrows and left the camp, saying that he would be back with food in six days. He traveled toward sunrise. It was two days after he left the lodges. He was wearied by journeying and fasting. The sun was sinking in the West, and Qua-co-che-bitche's heart was weak. He was ready to fall down. But he went a little further toward a clump of trees that were green, as if they grew by water. He saw a great stream flowing from under a hill side. His heart grew strong. He approached the crystal waters. He beheld the tracks of an innumerable herd of buffaloes. There were old ones and young ones—a great multitude. The trail was fresh. He quenched his thirst with the cool water, and was strong. He followed the trail rapidly. He soon came in sight of a great object, which he at first thought was a mountain. But on coming nearer it moved. Qua-co-che-bitche was alarmed. His heart grew weak. It was a great buffalo. It had a thousand feet and was very high and covered a large place. When it moved the earth trembled. A voice came to Qua-co-che-bitche, from the waters, bidding him slay the buffalo. Thus encouraged, he attacked it. He was surprised that his arrows were so effective. The great buffalo soon fell, making a noise like thunder and causing an earthquake. He cut a great quantity of flesh from the hump, and after strengthening his heart by eating, he started with some meat for his tribe. He went toward the setting sun. He had not traveled far when he met them, all coming at the command of a voice in the air to feast of the great buffalo. They went forward to the stream of clear water and feasted, for four moons, on the flesh of the great buffalo, and drank water from the pure stream. Their hearts became strong. They made shields of the hide of 539